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ABSTRACT

This book shows how teachers and specialists can be better informed about students' reading and writing abilities by observing students engaged in the processes of reading and writing than by administering isolated tests. The book demonstrates where traditional approaches to assessment fail and how to better help struggling students. Each chapter ends with a formal written report on a particular child struggling to read, which demonstrates the points set out in the book. Chapter 1, "You Never Asked Me to Read," discusses the useful assessment of reading problems based on actual texts, not standardized tests. Chapter 2, "What Reading Teachers Can Add to the Record," shows how factors typically ignored in testing can be addressed by authentic assessment. Chapter 3, "Reading the Files," explains how to read reports of testing and anecdotal evidence generally included in student records, learning how to interpret what students are asked to do on tests and in class in terms of how language is processed. Chapter 4, "Interviewing the Others," shows that parents and school colleagues have valuable information about a student's reading and writing that is often ignored. Observing classroom activity as a source of data for assessing children is the focus of chapter 5, "Observing the Class." Chapter 6, "Selecting the Tasks," explains how to design assessment for each child based on the principles of language functioning. Chapter 7, "Recommending Instruction," focuses on recommending or redesigning instruction. It warns against solving problems with packages; but rather, explains how to plan realistic instruction, within existing school structures, based on the principles of language learning. Mileidis Gort, author of chapter 8, "Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students' Literacy," describes the relationship between what a reader knows about his or her first language and how he or she needs to learn a second. Chapter 9, "Where Are They Now?" is devoted to catching up with the children whose case reports are central to the book, and shows how useful assessment of reading and writing has helped families, schools, and the children themselves change. Three appendixes outline instructional methods mentioned, describe tests used in case reports, and describe natural or authentic measures of reading and writing. Contains approximately 130 references. (SR)

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